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RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
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RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 000904

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DEPT FOR SE GRATION, S/USSES, AF A/S, AF/C, AF/E
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DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/05/2019

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SUBJECT: CHARGE MEETING WITH CHADIAN REBEL LEADERSHIP

REF: KHARTOUM 890

Classified By: CDA Robert E. Whitehead, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) On August 4, Charge d'Affaires (CDA) Whitehead met with Union des Forces de la Resistance (UFR) President Timane Erdimi to deliver talking points as requested by AF/C. Erdimi was accompanied by UFR Second Vice President Abdelwahid Aboul Makaye, Secretary General Abakar Tollimi, former RFC Commander and Erdimi confidante Mahamat Hanno, and Aboulanwar Mahamat Djarma Khatir.

12. (C) Erdimi told the CDA that the UFR leadership had been in Khartoum for approximately three weeks. He emphasized that they were not called back from the field by the GOS, but rather came to Khartoum due to the advent of the rainy season. They said that they are currently working on establishing a road map to begin talks with the GOC per the recent EU-led discussions in Geneva. Mahamat Hanno noted that in accordance with those discussions, UFR troops have pulled back from the border to a distance of "more than 100 kilometers." UFR has not had any direct contact with the GOC, said Erdimi, nor has he spoken to FSR leader Ahmat Soubiane, who, to the best of his knowledge, is not currently in Sudan.

13. (C) CDA Whitehead delivered the talking points provided by AF/C. The group's reaction was largely negative. Khatir said he wholeheartedly agreed with the need for engagement, but that the GOC was not a willing partner. He further criticized the international community for its perceived tolerance of the oppressive and illegitimate Deby regime. Several expressed concern that their lives would be at risk should they return home, and Hanno took offense at the assertion that the GOC was willing to work with donors and the political opposition to implement the August 13 accord. "Deby has not respected a single agreement since he has been in power," he complained. Erdimi remarked that he was "very disappointed" with the talking points' mention of possible punitive measures if the rebels continued to pursue a military solution. "You (US and presumably EU are asking us to lay down our arms, but what are you asking of Deby?" he pressed. Erdimi continued that French support of Deby was the crux of the problem and that the solution to Chad's problems involved greater pressure on Paris.

14. (C) Erdimi asked if the talking points can be translated into French and passed to UFR so that they can formally respond in writing. He also said he would welcome the chance to speak with DAS Karl Wycoff directly again. Abakar Tollimi echoed this request, noting that it was important for UFR to

meet with Wyckoff. CDA promised to relay the message. We will provide contact numbers in the event that DAS Wyckoff or AF/C wish to talk with the UFR.

15. (C) Comment: The UFR leaders blew hot on peace -- "we want a peaceful end to the conflict" -- but cold on the way forward -- "we won't deal with Deby." Erdimi's claim that the rebel leadership returned to Khartoum voluntarily is disingenuous, as we have heard from other sources that they were ordered back from the field by the GOS. Exactly why and for how long remains unclear, though it would appear they will stay here at least until they've produced a road map in accordance with the Geneva discussions and harvested the rainy season crops that Erdimi claimed they have planted. Despite repeated denials, the rebels are decidedly weaker than they were before May; and consequently, they have little recourse than to pursue the political track, at least until the end of the rainy season. In future contacts, we will continue to encourage them to pursue the political track.

WHITEHEAD